

Working on 'A Strategy for Excellence'

Black History Month observed

By Brian Smith

Sentinel Sports Editor

Capt. LaToya Jackson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Signal Brigade, spoke volumes with a simple phrase as part of a poetry reading.

"We have forgotten our ancestors. Our children have lost their way," Jackson said as part of the III Corps and 3rd Sig. Bde.'s African-American/Black History Month observance Feb. 22 at the Phantom Warrior Center.

She believes the fault lies very close to home.

"Because we have forgotten how to love one another, our adversaries live within our own gates," Jackson said. "That has to change for the leaders of tomorrow, our youth."

These two ideas expressed only part of the challenges talked about by speakers at the event, whose theme was "Reaching out to Youth: A Strategy for Excellence." It was a discussion of the rich heritage, struggles and celebrations of African-Americans.

Col. Robert Bethea Jr., 3rd Sig. Bde commander, said the differences that exist between all of us should be considered an aid, not a hindrance.

"We need to accentuate our differences to recognize our maximum potential," Bethea said. "By doing this, it will make for a better fighting force."

Master Sgt. Donald Williams, with the Reserve Officer Training Corps at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, spoke about the proud history of African-Americans such as Sojourner Truth, George Washington Carver and others



Photo by Brian Smith, Sentinel Sports Editor

Amber Snell, daughter of Master Sgt. Dave Snell, HHC, III Corps, sings "I Believe I Can Fly" during the III Corps and 3rd Sig. Bde.'s African American/Black History Month observance Feb. 22 at Phantom Warrior Center. Poetry readings, displays, speeches and an essay contest highlighted the 90-minute event.

who fought their way out of slavery to make lives better not only for African-Americans, but for all Americans.

"We need to use our diversity to make us better," Williams said. "Let's show the youth of today that the reason we are successful is because of what was

accomplished in the past."

Part of the problem with today's youth is brought on by the youth, according to featured speaker Lee Coffee.

"The youth today receive complex ideas and interaction on the superhighway known as the Internet," Coffee, a nationally-

known Buffalo Soldier historian, said. "What we need to recognize is that the wisdom of our elders is being underutilized. They have an abundance of information and values, values that come from home which is the only place they should be coming from."

In our faster-paced society, parents need to find the time to be better listeners, he said. Not only that, children need to find better people to listen to.

"Sometimes parents don't have the time to listen to their kids, but it's important," Coffee said. "If parents aren't listening to kids, the kids will find someone that will. Kids need to be listening to their grandparents and other elders who are a wealth of knowledge and values."

Coffee told stories of Buffalo Soldiers, so-named because the hair on their head matched the texture of the fur between a buffalo's horns, according to Coffee. Men of color began fighting during the Revolutionary War.

"This is not only African-American history, but American history as well," Coffee said. "By Americans. In America."

Fort Hood's Equal Employment Opportunity Office sponsored an essay contest in conjunction with the event. The theme of the contest was, "Celebrating Community: A Tribute to Black Fraternal, Social and Civic Institutions."

Winning the contest was Master Sgt. Jeryl Graves, HHC, 1st Cavalry Division. Staff Sgt. Tamara Williams, HHC, III Corps, was second, with CWO 2 Tilden J. Morgan, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery, third.